

# Women's Equality Strategy

## Aotearoa New Zealand

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Wāhine women and kōtiro girls in all their diversity are empowered to lead and supported to thrive within Aotearoa New Zealand.



Gender equality is a human right which benefits everyone.







# Women's Equality Strategy: Guiding principles




## Secure, safe and healthy




- Economically secure
- Good health & wellbeing
- Free from violence
- Inclusive & accessible education
- Quality housing

## Respected and represented



- Represented in leadership
- Mana & rangatiratanga
- Celebrated for achievements
- Contribution recognised
- Choice in participation

## Connected with whānau, community, culture



- Connected to culture, whenua and community
- Unpaid work recognised and valued
- Supported to thrive
- Accessible & flexible social services

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## Why we need a women's equality strategy

The Women's Equality Strategy (the Strategy) will provide a framework to ensure all wāhine women and kōtiro girls in Aotearoa New Zealand are empowered and supported to realise their strengths, support their children, tamariki, families and whānau, lead and thrive, and participate in the labour market, in their local communities and wider society in ways that are meaningful to them. Gender equality must be inclusive, and this Strategy recognises all people who identify as women.

Currently there is no high-level strategic objective to guide and connect a growing range of government agency activities, which address equality and equity for wāhine women and kōtiro girls.

The Strategy will provide a whole-of-government approach to improve the economic, environmental, social, mental, and physical wellbeing and resilience of women and girls in Aotearoa New Zealand. The Strategy is an aspirational high-level set of guiding principles, that aims to improve coordination, visibility and prioritisation across government agencies.

The Strategy will support the Government to meet its specific obligations to wāhine Māori under Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and address inequitable outcomes between Māori and non-Māori. The Strategy is intended to address an outstanding recommendation under the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The Strategy will support greater strategic impact and embedding gender analysis across the public sector. Gender analysis can be strengthened by using tools such as *Bringing Gender In*. Government agency staff should be supported to apply a gender, intersectional and Te Tiriti lens to all government policies and programmes.

The Strategy's vision and outcomes cannot be achieved by government alone.<sup>1</sup> The Strategy will also enable monitoring and tracking of the significant investment that is already happening across government for women and identify the gaps and need for further action. While this Strategy mainly focuses on work led by government agencies to promote equality for women, we recognise that iwi and Māori organisations, community organisations, and the private sector all play key roles in achieving equality.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, the National Strategy for Financial Capability contributes to ensuring economic security for women and equal retirement savings and is supported by private sector financial services industry organisations.

## Gender equality is a human right which benefits everyone.

Women play a critical role in the social, economic, and political landscapes of Aotearoa New Zealand. Improving social and economic outcomes for women and girls in all their diversity, will generate lifetime and intergenerational social, economic, health, and wellbeing benefits for women, children, family and partners, including men and boys, gender diverse people, whānau, hapū, and iwi. For most children and young people, their individual wellbeing is inextricably linked to the collective wellbeing of their family and whānau. This means that families and whānau must be well for children and young people to be well and families must be involved in efforts to make things better for children and young people.<sup>2</sup>

## Aotearoa has a legacy of progressing gender equality but there is more work to be done.

Aotearoa New Zealand has a reputation as a progressive leader in gender equality, ranking fourth most gender-equal country on the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Index in 2022.<sup>3</sup> The legacy of being the first nation to allow women the right to vote in 1893, along with more recent policy and legislative developments, has bolstered this reputation. There has been further visible progress in recent years through reducing the gender pay gap and ensuring women's representation in public sector leadership and board membership, and now a gender-equal parliament. New Zealanders generally value gender equality.<sup>4</sup>

In 2021 fewer girls than boys left school without any qualifications, and 80.9 percent of female school leavers had NCEA Level 2 or higher, compared with 76.5 percent of male school leavers.<sup>5</sup> 65.3 percent of those who gained bachelor degrees and above were women. 13.0 percent of women who gained bachelor degrees and above were wāhine Māori.<sup>6</sup>

However, looking beyond the headlines tells a more complex story. In some areas progress has not been equitable for different groups of women, such as wāhine Māori. Women are still systemically disadvantaged in a wide range of metrics and

<sup>2</sup> The *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy* focuses on improved outcomes for children and young people including collective action to support and advance wellbeing and equity of outcomes across the first 1000 days of a child's life.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2022/in-full/economy-profiles-5b89d90ea5>

<sup>4</sup> Kalafatelis E, Wood A. 2021. *Gender Attitudes Survey, August 2021*, p30. National Council of Women of New Zealand. URL: [https://genderequal.nz/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Report\\_NCWNZ\\_Gender-Attitudes-Survey-2021-FINAL\\_01-03-22.pdf](https://genderequal.nz/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Report_NCWNZ_Gender-Attitudes-Survey-2021-FINAL_01-03-22.pdf) (accessed 29 December 2022).

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Education, *Time Series Data. School leavers with highest attainment 2011-2021*

<sup>6</sup> Manatū Wāhine Annual Report, 2022

areas across Aotearoa New Zealand, with underlying factors such as gender norms and stereotypes creating barriers.

### Gender equality and gender equity are both important.

The Strategy recognises the unique and intersectional experiences of women in all their diversity across Aotearoa New Zealand and has a particular focus on improving outcomes for those who experience greater disadvantage and/or discrimination. Progress has not been equitable, and groups of women who experience particular disadvantage include: wāhine Māori; Pacific women; former refugees, recent migrants and ethnic women; disabled women; Rainbow people;<sup>7</sup> rural women; younger women and older women; sole mothers; and women in places of detention including prisons.

The Strategy seeks to provide equality of outcomes for all groups of women (gender equality). We recognise that focusing on equality of opportunity is not sufficient, as equal treatment will not produce equitable results. Women have different life experiences, histories, access to resources and have to overcome different barriers from bias and systemic structures.<sup>8</sup> Women in all their diversity can experience compounding barriers and disadvantage. For example, women who are disabled, culturally and linguistically diverse, have diverse sexuality and gender identity and live in poverty can experience intersecting disadvantage and discrimination.

Equity recognises that each person has different unique circumstances which can lead to different experiences of disadvantage. Addressing equity can require different approaches and provision of resources based on need.

The Strategy acknowledges that diverse individuals and groups of women may identify and work towards their own preferred outcomes.

**“We were never in the race in the first place. Pakeha are running laps in the race and we are not at the starting line but we are still trying to find the money to get the shoes to train and be prepared to run the race.”**

### Quote from engagement with Pacific women<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Rainbow people is an umbrella term that covers all sexual and gender minorities, and people with variations of sex characteristics. It includes the acronym LGBTQIA+ which stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, Asexual or Ace. The + recognises that there are further identities not listed.

<sup>8</sup> National Council of Women (2015), *Enabling women's potential: the social, economic and ethical imperative*, pg. 3

<sup>9</sup> Engagement with Pacific women on the Women's Employment Action Plan (internal report written by Bernadette Pereira for Manatū Wāhine, March 2022)



## We need to improve outcomes and uphold the mana of wāhine Māori

Wāhine Māori play a key role in caring for their whānau and the environment, and make a significant contribution to society.

For example, the 2018 Te Kupenga survey showed that 50 percent of wāhine Māori said it was important to be engaged in Māori, culture; 30 percent had taken part in activities to look after the environment such as restoring waterways, tree planting or pest control; 44 percent had undertaken unpaid work such as helping outside their household with cooking, cleaning and gardening; and similar proportions had helped out at schools, churches, sports clubs or community organisations.<sup>10</sup>

However, wāhine Māori experience economic discrimination and disparities in health, housing, employment and education. Wāhine Māori experience high rates of victimisation for both personal and household offences.<sup>11</sup> They are also more likely to be repeat victims of crime.

As tangata whenua, wāhine Māori hold an important status in Aotearoa and play key roles in whānau, hapū and iwi as whare tangata and whare mātauranga. We need to honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi for wāhine Māori and demonstrate commitment to the prosperity and wellbeing of wāhine Māori across all spheres of life.

This is about addressing social and economic disparities currently experienced by wāhine Māori and protecting the rights and rangatiratanga of wāhine Māori, ensuring representation in leadership, governance and decision-making structures.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.stats.govt.nz/news/maori-women-look-after-whanau-and-whenua/>  
<sup>11</sup> Ministry of Justice, NZ Crime and Victims Survey, Cycle 3 (2019-2020)

## Vision

Wāhine women and kōtiro girls in all their diversity are empowered to lead and supported to thrive within Aotearoa New Zealand.

## Principles

Gender equality in Aotearoa New Zealand will mean that all women and girls are:

### Secure, safe and healthy

Women and girls and their families and whānau are economically secure and able to realise their aspirations. They are safe and free from violence, and feel a sense of safety, identity and belonging, in all spheres including online spaces, the workplace, at school, and at home. Women and girls have quality housing and are protected from the impacts of climate change and natural hazards. They have good health and wellbeing, including mental health and spiritual health. Education is inclusive, affordable and relevant to future needs.

### Respected and represented

Women occupy their share of leadership roles across society, without systemic barriers to participation. Women and girls in all their diversity are recognised for their achievements and contributions. The mana and rangatiratanga of wāhine Māori is acknowledged and upheld. Women and girls participate, and lead in, traditionally male roles (such as trades and IT) to the degree they wish to.

### Connected with family, whānau, community, culture and environment

Women engage in paid work if they wish and have the supports they need to thrive and meet any responsibilities. These supports include quality flexible work and accessible and affordable social services such as childcare and transport. Unpaid work is recognised and valued, including wāhine Māori, Pacific women, rainbow people, and former refugees, recent migrants and ethnic women upholding and supporting their families, whānau, communities and cultures, and caring for the environment. Women and girls express their identities as part of, and are well-connected to, the communities and places that matter to them.

# Understanding the principles

## Secure, safe and healthy

### Economically secure

Women's economic security throughout their lives is essential to the realisation of gender equality.

Overall, there have been improvements in women's educational attainment, labour force participation, and support for women to take on paid work. Women's participation in the labour force has increased from 54.3 percent to 67.4 percent from 1991 to September 2022.<sup>12</sup>

However, on average, women's economic security is less than men. Women earn less even when they have the same qualifications; continue to experience a gender pay gap, and an ethnic-gender pay gap for Māori and Pacific women; are more likely to be concentrated in lower-skilled, lower-paid, and/or part-time or casual work, often seeking more working hours or working non-standard hours; are involved in insecure or limited employment conditions, making them more vulnerable to job losses; and are more likely than men to have experienced discrimination, harassment, or bullying at work. Te Mahere Whai Mahi Wāhine Women's Employment Action Plan recognises these issues and provides a roadmap of actions towards a better future for women's employment.

A 2022 study identified a 17 percent gap in average KiwiSaver savings between men and women. This gap is more pronounced in older age groups – on average women in their 50s have 32 percent less in KiwiSaver savings than men of the same age.<sup>13</sup> Women's relative lack of retirement savings and wealth is compounded by women living longer and being more likely to live alone.

Māori and Pacific women, disabled women, sole mothers, Rainbow people, and former refugees, recent migrants and ethnic women all continue to experience significantly worse outcomes in the labour market and continue to face greater barriers to accessing the gains made by women in the workplace.

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<sup>12</sup> Stats NZ Household Labour Force Survey, seasonally adjusted statistics from September 2022 quarter  
<sup>13</sup> <https://www.stats.govt.nz/news/kiwisaver-nest-eggs-grow-5000-in-three-years>



Targeted employment and business support can be key for these groups of women. Wāhine Māori with no or few qualifications are more likely than other women to be unemployed, be in lower-paid occupations, disproportionately engaged in multiple employment, and work in part-time and casual roles.

Focus group findings on employment, training and education with wāhine Māori in 2021 found that success would mean, among other things, whānau being financially stable, being supported, and reaping the rewards of business developments.<sup>14</sup>

Without economic security and social security, women and their children, families, and whānau experience the impacts of poverty on their health and wellbeing, education, housing and ability to participate in their communities. The Welfare Expert Advisory Group (WEAG) noted that women are significantly affected by the welfare system. The WEAG's vision was a welfare system that ensures people have adequate income and standard of living, are treated with and can live in dignity and are able to participate meaningfully in their communities.<sup>15</sup>

Economic security can be particularly precarious when children are young. There are specific impacts for some groups, such as sole mothers (whose economic security can be impacted by relationship breakdown) and families with disabled children. Mothers returning to paid work will continue to suffer a 'motherhood penalty'. Mothers, on average, experience a 4.4 percent decrease in hourly wages upon returning to work; mothers who take longer than 12 months to return to work experience an 8.3 percent decrease in hourly earnings.<sup>16</sup>

During consultation, parents of new babies talked about the impact that financial stresses can have on their babies. One new mum spoke about how she relied on benefits and would not have been able to survive without family support as well. "It's such a stressful and hard time and then money is just a huge added stress. And you physically can't work – you can't take your baby to work, but then you physically can't live on what they give you."<sup>17</sup>

For former refugees, recent migrants and ethnic women, it is important that new

<sup>14</sup> Kapuarangi Associates report prepared for Manatū Wāhine, Ngā Reo Wāhine o te Tairāwhiti – focus group findings, August 2021

<sup>15</sup> Whakamana Tāngata: Restoring Dignity to Social Security in New Zealand, Welfare Expert Advisory Group, 2019, <https://www.weag.govt.nz/assets/documents/WEAG-report/aed960c3ce/WEAG-Report.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Sin, I., Dasgupta, K., & Pacheco, G. (2018). Parenthood and labour market outcomes, Ministry for Women.

<sup>17</sup> Office of the Children's Commissioner (February 2019), What makes a good life? Children and young people's views on wellbeing.

policies, such as changes to immigration policies, don't have a negative impact on their ability to work.

Young people want and value economic stability. In recent engagement many rangatahi Māori and young people spoke about the connections between mental health and economic concerns, and the disproportionate impact of these issues on rangatahi Māori, Pacific and rainbow people.<sup>18</sup>

### Safe and free from violence

Addressing gender equality is a crucial component of preventing and responding to violence against women and girls. Gender-based violence is widespread and tenacious. Some of the risks and drivers of this violence are economic insecurity, deprivation and dependence, food and housing insecurities and lack of access to push through economic barriers.

The extent of violence against women is a global phenomenon: globally, 1 in 3 women have been subjected to physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. Gender based violence (GBV)<sup>19</sup> leaves women and girls at risk of not achieving the highest possible standards of life. It is a violation of women's human rights and critical to the realisation of achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.<sup>20</sup>

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) especially intimate partner violence (IPV) and sexual violence (SV) is seen by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as a "major public health problem". The WHO identifies that some of the impacts of VAWG include poor health, impacts on children (including infant and child mortality and morbidity), and the economic costs of intimate partner and sexual violence (inability to work, loss of wages, lack of participation in regular activities and limited ability to care for themselves and their children).<sup>21</sup>

There are many OECD governments that regularly identify violence against women as the top gender equality issue their country faces. Yet, addressing this complex

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<sup>18</sup> Te Hiringa Mahara – Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission (2022). Young people speak out about wellbeing – an insights report into the wellbeing of Rangatahi Māori and other Young People in Aotearoa. [www.mhwc.govt.nz](http://www.mhwc.govt.nz)

<sup>19</sup> Violence against women and girls is defined as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women and girls, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life – [www.unwomen.org](http://www.unwomen.org)

<sup>20</sup> United Nations. 2015. Transforming our world: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>

issue presents critical governance and implementation challenges.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, Te Aorerekura (December 2021) sets out a collective path for government, tangata whenua, specialist sectors and communities to eliminate family and sexual violence. We have made progress as a nation, but we have a long way to go. New Zealand women continue to suffer from high levels of family and sexual violence, and we continue to rank very high in OECD statistics in this area.

There is no single basis that can be identified as the cause of violence, but harmful social norms and the gender inequities it results in, remain some of the strongest and most tenacious reasons. The power inequalities between genders creates an imbalance; that and collectively shared norms about women's roles and violence against women.<sup>22</sup>

Challenging gender norms, roles and expectations is fundamental to driving changes to discriminatory attitudes and beliefs and preventing gender-based violence.<sup>23</sup>

In New Zealand, a quarter to a third of New Zealand women will experience intimate partner violence (IPV) or sexual violence in their lifetime. The biggest risk factor for being a victim of IPV or sexual violence is being a woman. Women are 2.5 times more likely to experience intimate partner violence than men.<sup>24</sup>

The research also shows that women with intersectional experiences face additional barriers and inequities. Māori experience almost three times more IPV incidents than the national average.<sup>25</sup> Disabled women experience high rates of family and sexual violence, compared with non-disabled women.<sup>26</sup>

Once in a violent situation, lack of access to economic resources can also serve as a barrier to women who want to leave. Evidence also indicates that job loss and sustained unemployment can be associated with a significant increase in men's perpetration of IPV.<sup>27</sup> In New Zealand, women experience the most economic harm,

<sup>22</sup> <https://blogs.worldbank.org/developmenttalk/gender-based-violence-power-and-norms>

<sup>23</sup> In the recent New Zealand Gender Attitudes Survey (August 2021)<sup>14</sup>, a little over three quarters of respondents (79 percent) agreed that gender equality in New Zealand is a fundamental right.

<sup>24</sup> NZ Crime and Victims Survey: Key findings, Cycle 3 (2019/2020)

<sup>25</sup> NZ Crime and Victims Survey: Core Report, Cycle 4 (2020/2021)

<sup>26</sup> Lifetime Prevalence of Intimate Partner Violence and Disability: Results from a Population-based Study in New Zealand. <https://www.ajpmonline.org/article>. Prevalence of Non-partner Physical and Sexual Violence Against People with Disabilities. <https://www.ajpmonline.org/article>

<sup>27</sup> UN Women 2019. 10. Evidence suggesting causality, however, is mixed: see Morgan & Boxall 2022, Schneider et al. 2016 and Peitzmeier et al. 2022; and UN Women 2020b



and evidence suggests that women's lifetime experience of this has doubled in the period between 2003 and 2019, to around 9 percent.<sup>28</sup>

Violence can become more prevalent in times of uncertainty, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and disasters, although the isolation or urgency of the situation thwarts reporting systems and violence is under-reported. Therefore, it is critical to deal with issues of violence prior to an event, which builds overall community resilience.

Research by the Department of Corrections indicates that three quarters of women in New Zealand prisons have been victims of family violence, rape and/or sexual assault as a child or adult.<sup>29</sup> Wāhine Māori have higher incarceration rates. Six percent of the total prison population are women. Sixty six percent of women in prison are Māori.<sup>30</sup> For these women, interventions must be gender-informed, trauma-informed and culturally appropriate.

The rapid global expansion of the digital age has generated opportunities for the empowerment of women and girls but advancing technology and platforms have also introduced new spaces and forms of inequality and threats to their safety.

Women and girls in all their diversity are significantly more at risk of facing online violence and harassment. Women in the public eye face significantly higher levels of hate speech, misogyny, and online/ digital and technological facilitated violence, than their male counter parts<sup>31</sup>. There is new global understanding of the continuum between real world and online violence with technology helping to perpetuate many forms of abuse, harassment, surveillance and stalking.<sup>32</sup>

In 2017, research found that girls in New Zealand reported personal attacks by their peers as their most harmful online experiences.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> <https://nzfvc.org.nz/news/new-research-finds-changes-rates-intimate-partner-violence-nz>.

<sup>29</sup> Department of Corrections: Practice: The New Zealand Corrections Journal, Volume 5, Issue 1: July 2017.

<sup>30</sup> Reference: Wāhine – Erere ana ki te pae hou: Women rising above a new horizon. Women's Strategy 2021-2025, Department of Corrections

[https://www.corrections.govt.nz/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/44644/Corrections\\_Wahine\\_-\\_E\\_rere\\_ana\\_ki\\_te\\_pae\\_hou\\_2021\\_-\\_2025.pdf](https://www.corrections.govt.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/44644/Corrections_Wahine_-_E_rere_ana_ki_te_pae_hou_2021_-_2025.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> The GBV in the online world also pushes women and girls to self censor, step away from and limit their participation and ability to engage online; the risk is even higher for women who face intersecting forms of discrimination, including women of colour, women with disabilities and rainbow people.

<sup>32</sup> [https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/explainer/2023/02/power-on-how-we-can-supercharge-an-equitable-digital-future?gclid=EAlalQobChMI393ixsHs\\_gIVF3SLCh2mUwBzEAAYASAAEgJ9ofD\\_BwE](https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/explainer/2023/02/power-on-how-we-can-supercharge-an-equitable-digital-future?gclid=EAlalQobChMI393ixsHs_gIVF3SLCh2mUwBzEAAYASAAEgJ9ofD_BwE)

<sup>33</sup> Netsafe, Impact of COVID-19 on online harm

## Pae Ora – Healthy futures

Supporting women to have positive health and wellbeing, has impacts across generations and benefits families, whānau and communities. We need to recognise the strength of women and of their families, whānau and communities in knowing what they need to achieve pae ora. Pae ora means healthy futures. This term embraces the concepts of mauri ora (healthy individuals), whānau ora (healthy families), and wai ora (healthy environments). The concept of pae ora is broad and encompasses issues across all three principles. We know that health outcomes are continuing to improve overall for women in Aotearoa New Zealand. However, women spend more years in poor health than men.

Women have different needs and experiences across their lives and these all impact on their health and wellbeing, such as their education experiences, care responsibilities, aging, employment and income. Women can also experience overlapping forms of disadvantage and discrimination that negatively impact on their health and wellbeing, including sexism, racism, ableism, homophobia, and transphobia.<sup>34</sup>

The World Health Organisation defines equity as the absence of avoidable or remediable differences among groups of people (in He Korowai Oranga – Māori Health Strategy). This acknowledges that differences in health status are the result of differential access to the resources necessary for people to lead healthy lives. Wāhine Māori experience inequitable health outcomes in terms of poor health, disability and premature death. Māori health status remains unequal with non-Māori across almost all chronic and infectious diseases as well as injuries and suicide (He Korowai Oranga – Māori Health Strategy).

We need to enable self-determination and mana motuhake and focus on achieving equitable outcomes for wāhine Māori. This includes honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi for wāhine Māori, protecting mātauranga Māori, and addressing racism and discrimination (Whakamaua: Māori Health Action Plan 2020-2025).

There are also other groups who experience inequities in health and wellbeing - Pacific women, former refugees, recent migrants and ethnic women, disabled women, older women, Rainbow communities, including takatāpui people and

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<sup>34</sup> Kia Manawanui Aotearoa- Long-term pathway to mental wellbeing, September 2021)

MVPFAFF+,<sup>35</sup> and sole mothers. Rural women can also experience barriers to accessing health services.

We know that sole parents in Aotearoa New Zealand experience disproportionately poorer wellbeing. In 2018, women made up 82 percent of sole parents in New Zealand. Official wellbeing statistics from 2021 found that 39.5 percent of sole parents gave low ratings of overall life satisfaction, compared with only 11.3 percent of partnered mothers and 14.6 percent of partnered fathers.

Life satisfaction can improve when people feel like they have more control over their lives. For example, some trans women and trans men have reported that their quality of life had improved since identifying as trans.<sup>36</sup>

### Safe and secure housing

Housing is a social determinant of health and wellbeing. Living in unsafe, insecure housing can make it more difficult for women to access healthcare for themselves and their families, to participate in work, and to contribute to their communities.

Rental housing is often less safe and secure from the impacts of disasters. Often, unsafe and insecure housing is sited in risky, unsafe areas and the impacts of disasters, and ability to recover from them, will be more challenging for those with lesser financial security. Many women may not be able to leave violent homes because of limited options to go to and the risk of being homeless.

Women are one of the groups identified in the Aotearoa New Zealand Homelessness Action Plan<sup>37</sup> as being at risk of homelessness. The plan identifies 18 actions, focused on four main areas: supply; support; prevention; and system enablers.

Specific issues for women include being less likely to be identified as homeless, that single parent families are more likely than two parent families to be in temporary accommodation and that women are more likely to be the primary caregiver of children and young people. It can be difficult to quantify the number of women experiencing homelessness because they are often not present in public spaces as

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35 Describing Pacific identities: Mahu (Hawai'i and Tahiti), Vaka sa lewa lewa (Fiji), Palopa (Papua New Guinea), Fa'afafine (Samoa), Akava'ine (Rarotonga), Fakaleiti (Tonga), Fakafifine (Niue).

36 Te Rau Tira – Wellbeing Outcomes Report 2021 – Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission

37 <https://www.hud.govt.nz/our-work/aotearoa-new-zealand-homelessness-action-plan-2020-2023/> (accessed 05/04/2023)



rough sleepers, who are more often male.

### Resilient in the face of crisis and disruption

Women are disproportionately impacted by economic, social and environmental shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and community floods. Women work hard to keep families and communities well, together and rebuilt in the face of significant adversity. Climate change increases existing inequalities.

The impacts of crises and disasters are not felt equally, for example Māori and Pacific communities were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and recent flooding and cyclones in Aotearoa New Zealand in ways which are different to other communities.

Evidence suggests that gender-based violence and violence against women and girls, increases in times of disaster or crisis, political or social unrest, humanitarian emergencies, and destruction of natural resources. In addition to gender-based violence, other impacts of climate change on women include decreased quality and availability of food, housing, water and sanitation; impacts on physical and mental health; increased pressures on health care systems; and loss of whenua and awa.

We need to create resilience against future shocks for women, and for the groups of women most impacted. Since risks from climate change and disasters can threaten wellbeing and resilience, it is critical that the disproportionate impacts are well-understood and reduced.

Climate change is consistently raised by young people as a pressing and present issue which they think about their future.<sup>38</sup> We need to support women and girls to experience connections to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. We can empower women and girls as climate and environment leaders for the future.

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38 Te Hiringa Mahara – Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission (2022). Young people speak out about wellbeing: An insights report into the wellbeing of Rangatahi Māori and other Young People in Aotearoa. [www.mhwc.govt.nz](http://www.mhwc.govt.nz)

## Access to an inclusive and supportive education

Future changes in work trends will impact on women. Workers who are least connected to the education system and are historically discriminated against or exploited in labour markets are most likely to be negatively affected by changes. We need to focus on an inclusive and supportive education for young people who may experience multiple disadvantages and discrimination.

The Oranga Tamariki Action Plan currently drives the system-wide response to improving life-course outcomes for young people who are of interest to Oranga Tamariki, across the children's sector. We also know that young mothers are less likely to finish secondary school. In 2022, 11.6 percent of young women were not in employment, education, or training. 34.6 percent of these young women stated caregiving as their reason for this. Half of young mothers are wāhine Māori and 20 percent are young Pacific women.

Recent research has highlighted that students with diverse sexual orientation and gender identities are three times more likely to experience bullying than the general population<sup>39</sup>. Many Rainbow young people do not feel safe at school and do not see themselves reflected in the curriculum.<sup>40</sup>

## Respected and represented

### The mana and rangatiratanga of wāhine Māori is recognised and honoured

Gender equality will never be achieved until wāhine Māori outcomes are improved. Prior to the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in 1840, wāhine Māori held a variety of customary leadership roles within their whānau, iwi, hapū and community structures. They were involved in decision-making processes, including those relating to whenua, resources and communities.

Wāhine Māori are currently under-represented in many decision-making bodies and processes including parliament, local government and board representation. Claims made under the Mana Wāhine Kaupapa Inquiry regarding wāhine Māori in leadership roles describe how the imposition of British law and social norms on Māori

<sup>39</sup> Counting ourselves, Trans and Non-Binary Survey, 2022. <https://countingourselves.nz>

<sup>40</sup> PRISM: Human rights issues relating to sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics in Aotearoa New Zealand. Human Rights Commission, 2020.

was detrimental to the mana of wāhine Māori and has resulted in the erosion of their traditional leadership roles, status and power which has wide impacts across multiple aspects of life and society.

We need to ensure wāhine Māori are strongly represented and involved in leadership, governance and decision making.

Focus group findings on employment, training and education with wāhine Māori in 2021 found that success would mean, among other things, mana being acknowledged, enhanced mauri, women in leadership roles, stigma being removed around women in the trade industry, and a wāhine Māori-led trade industry.

### Women occupy leadership roles across society

Women in all of their diversity need to be supported to lead including wāhine Māori; Pacific women; former refugees, recent migrants and ethnic women; disabled women; Rainbow people;<sup>41</sup> rural women; younger women and older women; and sole mothers. Women are less likely to be in higher-paid leadership roles, particularly in the private sector, and there are often limited options for flexible work in these higher-paid roles.

This contributes to the continuing gender pay gap. In the private sector, women held 22.5 percent of board director roles and 25.4 percent of chief executive and senior manager roles of all NZX listed companies in 2020.<sup>42</sup>

However, there have been many gains for women in leadership in recent years. The gender balance of Parliament has continued to improve since the advent of the mixed member proportional (MMP) voting system in 1996. As of 30 June 2022, women made up 49 percent (18 of 37) of chief executives in the public service compared with 24.1 percent in 2012. Women now occupy 55.8 percent of senior leadership positions (up from 39.8 percent in 2010) in the public service (the top three tiers of management).

Wāhine Māori and tāne Māori represented 16.4 percent of the public service in 2021. However, Māori continue to be under-represented in high-paying roles such as

<sup>41</sup> Rainbow people is an umbrella term that covers all sexual and gender minorities, and people with variations of sex characteristics. It includes the acronym LGBTQIA+ which stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, Asexual or Ace. The + recognises that there are further identities not listed.

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.nzx.com/regulation/nzregco/diversity-statistics>

policy analysts in comparison with Pākehā public servants, and are represented in higher numbers as inspectors, regulatory officers, and social, health and education workers.

The Government has met its target of 50 percent women's participation on public sector boards, with 52.5 percent of appointed members being women as of December 2021. There remains, however, a lack of diversity on boards and in senior leadership roles for Māori, Pacific and other diverse women, and barriers still exist for disabled people.

There remains a gender gap in local government representation, though the proportion of women elected to local bodies has risen from one-quarter to over one-third (40 percent) over the past 25 years, with the number of women candidates also increasing (to 36 percent).

### Women are supported to participate and lead in all sectors

Women leaders are great role models to other women and girls. This helps to break stereotypes and encourages women and girls into careers in sectors where they have been under-represented, such as in science, technology, engineering, and as business owners. There are fewer women and girls in some areas where there are good opportunities, such as technology and construction.

New Zealand has a highly gender-segregated labour market with around half of all women and men working in occupations where at least 70 percent of workers are of the same gender. In the year to September 2022, around 60 percent of working women were concentrated in three industries: healthcare and social assistance (17.4 percent); retail, trade, and accommodation (16.8 percent); and education and training (11.7 percent). Occupational segregation is a driver of the gender pay gap and presents issues for women in employment to the degree to which segregated workforces experience low incomes and undervaluation. In certain occupations where the work is, or has been, predominantly performed by women, wages have often been lower than occupations where the work has been performed predominantly by men.

To share the benefits of technology equitably, there must be seats at the table for women and girls in all their diversity, and the appropriate tools and funding. Women receive 80 percent of the technology funding of their male counterparts and this



investment gap is not unique to Aotearoa New Zealand.

At the same time as supporting women to participate and lead in traditionally male roles, we need to place greater value on roles and sectors that are traditionally female-dominated. For example, pay equity processes ensure that occupations dominated by women are free from gender-based undervaluation.

### Celebrated for their achievements and contributions

In terms of recognition, women have traditionally been under-represented as recipients of Royal New Zealand Honours, but this gap has closed in recent years. In the 2022 Queen's Birthday Honours, women received 97 of 187 honours (51.9 percent) compared with 51.2 percent in 2021, and 33.7 percent in 2011.

### Connected with family, whānau, community, culture and environment

#### Engage in paid work with the supports they need

Women and men have different patterns of participation in the paid workforce, principally because women spend a greater proportion of their time on unpaid and care work than men. When women take career breaks or work part-time it can affect their careers. Childcare is essential infrastructure for mothers and other caregivers to access paid work or further education.

Access to affordable childcare continues to be a barrier to employment. Mothers and sole parents (82 percent of whom are women) are most likely to encounter difficulty in accessing affordable childcare. For many women it is not economically worthwhile to return to work because the costs of childcare outweigh the wages they make. Research shows that mothers who were in low-paid work before becoming parents face an 'employment gap' (time out of the workforce). Mothers are also impacted by the discrepancy between school hours and full-time work hours.

There are large ethnic disparities for Māori and Pacific mothers' access to childcare. These groups are two to three times more likely to experience access issues than European mothers, and three to four times as likely to face long term access issues. 17 percent of Pacific mothers said they had no choice between childcare options, compared with 9 percent of European mothers.

In engagement for *Te Mahere Whai Mahi Wāhine Women's Employment Action Plan*, groups of Pacific women noted that parental leave and childcare could better reflect cultural norms and processes, including formal recognition of the extended aiga model of sharing of care.

While many women want or need to return to the paid workforce after having children, with high quality, accessible childcare; others want to be at home with their children, and many want quality part-time and flexible work that allows them to earn an income while caring for their children, family and whānau. Underemployment (people working part-time, who would like more hours than they are working) varies across industries and is closely linked to industries where women's work is most concentrated.

### Unpaid caring responsibilities are recognised and valued

Unpaid caring responsibilities remain unequally distributed between women and men. In heterosexual relationships, women take on the majority of unpaid care in the household, particularly when children become part of the household. Research has found that this unequal distribution of caring responsibilities, is deeply embedded in social norms that view unpaid care as 'a female prerogative'.<sup>43</sup> Men can also be dissatisfied with these gender norms. The Christchurch longitudinal study found men wanted to parent more and actively be involved in unpaid care of their children.<sup>44</sup>

Much of the available research on the distribution of care within relationships focuses on patterns applying to heterosexual couples only. The experiences of Rainbow people in relationships is an area requiring further analysis and research.<sup>45</sup>

Unpaid responsibilities are not just about caring for children, but can include caring for older, sick, or disabled family members, and community and cultural roles. Families with disabled children often face additional care needs.

Unpaid work is not measured as part of the economy in GDP terms.

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.oecd.org/dev/development-gender/MEASURING-WOMENS-ECONOMIC-EMPOWERMENT-Gender-Policy-Paper-No-16.pdf>

<sup>44</sup> Gibbs, Fergusson, Harwood and Boden (2014) directly asked parents about their time use satisfaction, and found that men were less satisfied than women with both their work-life balance and work-parenting balance and reported that they would like to be more involved in childcare.

<sup>45</sup> An OECD study indicated that same-sex couples, particularly lesbian couples, tend to share housework more equally than heterosexual couples. OECD (2016), *Dare to Share: Germany's experience in promoting equal partnership in families*. OECD publishing. Paris.

This underestimates women's economic contribution and continues to be a subject of academic and media attention.

Research has shown that wāhine Māori spend more time caring for others in their household and do more voluntary and community work than women from other ethnic groups. Focus group findings on employment, training and education with wāhine Māori in 2021 prepared for Manatū Wāhine found that success would mean more time to dedicate to whānau, to give and be of service, and to love and enjoy these roles.

The majority of those who care for children and young people in care are women. The paid and unpaid work that Oranga Tamariki caregivers take on needs to be appropriately valued.

### Identity and connection

In engagement for Te Mahere Whai Mahi Wāhine Women's Employment Action Plan, groups of wāhine Māori and Pacific women noted they want their cultural skills, responsibilities at work, and their unpaid contributions, to be valued. They also want a work environment that is culturally safe and for racism and discrimination to be addressed. Wāhine Māori want a whole wellbeing approach and 'Te Ao Māori everyday'. This builds overall resilience for all-of-society.

Access to information technology and communication are important tools to support women's participation and connections in society. The need to support disabled people in accessing all places, services and information with ease and dignity is reflected in both The New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016-2026 (Outcome 5) and the third report of the Independent Monitoring Mechanism of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.<sup>46</sup>

Rural women's abilities to receive information, connect and participate in society, business and education can also be affected by distances to services, isolation, and limited digital connectivity.

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<sup>46</sup> This report notes "Disabled people have the right to express their opinions, and to seek, receive, and share information in forms that they can understand and use. Missing out on information, and being unable to express opinions, prevent disabled people from participating fully as citizens and limit their ability to interact with both government and wider society independently. Ombudsman, Human Rights Commission and DPO Coalition, *Making Disability Rights Real 2014 to 2019 – Third report of the Independent Monitoring Mechanism of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*

Identity and connection are important elements of Wāhine – E rere ana ki te pae hou -Corrections Women's Strategy 2021-2025. The strategy aims to uphold the mana and dignity of women by working in a strengths-based way; addressing the whole person and complex needs (trauma, addiction and parenting) and supporting their connection to culture; developing a pathway for each woman including healing from trauma, treatment programmes, education and industry; and supporting and maintaining whānau relationships.

The recent What About Me? Youth Health and Wellbeing Survey results identified that rainbow young people and young people with disabilities find it harder to express their identity and find pride in who they are.<sup>47</sup>

Rangatahi in care have raised the need for their voices to be heard, valued and acted on.<sup>48</sup>

### Supported to participate in sport and recreation

Research shows the strong link between being physically active and good mental wellbeing. These positive effects for young women and girls can include relieving social and emotional stress and pressures and promoting feelings of accomplishment, self-worth and empowerment.<sup>49</sup>

The Government's Women and Girls in Sport and Active Recreation Strategy (2018) aims to ensure that all women and girls, in all roles, are visible, feel positive about the contribution they make, and value being involved and participating in all levels of play, active recreation and sport.

There is a persistent gender gap in participation rates in sport and recreation. The COVID-19 pandemic altered participation levels and increased inequities for some groups including young Māori and Pacific, and young people from high deprivation areas.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> What About Me? Youth health and wellbeing survey (September 2022). Overview Report. [msd.govt.nz](https://www.msd.govt.nz)

<sup>48</sup> Te Mātātaki 2021 – Findings from the 2019/2020 Survey of tamariki and rangatahi in care. Oranga Tamariki (May 2021).

<sup>49</sup> Sport NZ, Young Women Profile, (2021).

<sup>50</sup> Sport NZ, Active NZ: Changes in Participation (2021).



## How the strategy has been informed

The Strategy has been informed by well-established global principles and agreements, international strategies on achieving gender equality and focus on what is working well in other jurisdictions, and existing strategies and work programmes in Aotearoa New Zealand which are focused on women.

Manatū Wāhine has drawn on qualitative material from past consultations and engagements with New Zealand women. We have reviewed and summarised more than thirty submissions, summary documents, and qualitative reports to draw together common themes and priorities directly from the voices of New Zealand women. We particularly focused on drawing out wāhine Māori and intersectional voices. We have also drawn on previous work to define what gender equality would look like, in the words of people in Aotearoa New Zealand.<sup>51</sup>

Engagement throughout the development of the Strategy has been crucial to ensure it is fit for purpose and represents the diverse voices of women across Aotearoa New Zealand. This includes engagement with the National Advisory Council on the Employment of Women, the International Women's Caucus and various community organisations which support women.

The principles of the Strategy have been informed by Te Ao Māori frameworks, for example He Ara Waiora, and the Mana Wāhine Kaupapa Inquiry.

The Mana Wāhine Kaupapa Inquiry examines claims alleging prejudice against wāhine Māori arising from breaches of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, in both historical and contemporary times. At the heart of all the claims is that rangatiratanga has been diminished, resulting in social, economic, environmental and cultural loss. Claimants to the inquiry allege loss of rangatiratanga and, as a result, social, economic, environmental, and cultural losses.

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<sup>51</sup> *Enabling women's potential – the social, economic and ethical imperative*. A white paper produced by the National Council of Women of NZ (November 2015).

Claims have been organised thematically into four 'pou' or pillars:

- whakapapa/whānau – Education, health, justice, family and sexual violence, housing
- rangatiratanga – Leadership and decision-making roles
- whai rawa – Employment, including the wāhine Māori pay gap and pay equity
- whenua – Resource management and land tenure.

Without claiming to reflect the interests of claimants, we note that the four pou have overlaps with the three draft principles above.

Another model of Te Ao Māori wellbeing is He Ara Waiora, which was initially developed for the Tax Working Group by expert Māori thought leaders, Ngā Pūkenga. This Te Ao Māori model has strong alignment with the Equality Strategy principles.

He Ara Waiora states that people (tangata) and collectives (kainga) thrive when they:

- have a strong sense of identity and belonging (mana tukuiho)
- participate and connect within their communities, including fulfilling their rights and obligations (mana tautuutu)
- have the capability to decide on their aspirations and realise them in the context of their own unique circumstances (mana āheinga)
- have the power to grow sustainable, intergenerational prosperity (mana whanake).